

Western MRS Meeting Notes
November 28, 2006
St. John s Episcopal Church, Asheville

Counties Present: Avery, Buncombe, Caldwell, Catawba, Cherokee, Clay, Gaston, Graham, Haywood, Henderson, Jackson, Lincoln, Macon, McDowell, Polk, Swain, Transylvania

Introductions

News

Report on:

- 7 Strategies
- Assignment of cases
- Switching tracks
- Blended caseloads
- Shared Parenting

News - from the Differential Response Conference in San Diego How are other states doing and how does NC compare? (Will have several people come to the January meeting and report out about this.)

- Only 15 states doing differential response as defined by the federal government
- Missouri and Minnesota are still seen as the pioneers and the leaders here. But some people are starting to see that NC is in there too.
- AFI presented on the principles of partnership
- Catawba and Guilford presented as well

Reporting out on progress on the 7 strategies:

- Collaboration between CPS and Work First
- Structured Intake unless there are issues, this is a freebie everyone is doing it
- Dual Response
- Collaboration with Law Enforcement
- In Home Redesign
- Child & Family Teams
- Shared Parenting

Note on In-Home Redesign this reflects our hope for overall system change. For in-home the difference is how often you see the high and intensive risk cases versus the moderate and low. This applies the most resources to cases with the highest need.

Avery - 3rd wave

CPS/WF a WF worker shares office with a CPS worker, invites WF to come to CPS staffings and she comes when she can

Dual Response take as many as family as they can, however when they hear there are bruised they are reluctant to take as family at first, will switch down if they can

Law Enforcement - work pretty well together but have no written memorandum. Sometimes hear after the fact of DV situations where there are children involved and

CPS was never called. Getting ready to get a new sheriff so that may help this work better

In Home redesign working as it is supposed to

CFT an area where they are struggling. Director is encouraging them but it has been hard to get the training so that they can do them. They are having family centered meetings though.

SP somewhat slow to implement. Had a couple of scares in their county and since they are a small county people know everything and foster parents are sometimes scared. An incident in Watauga where a foster child was taken by force from a foster family has scared foster parents, even though Watauga had not even implemented Shared Parenting yet (in other words, the incident had nothing to do with Shared Parenting.)

TALS program technical assistance and learning program through NC State. This is a service free of charge and they will come work with you in your county to help you with CFTs.

Clay 2nd wave (the person from this county was a FC worker).

CPS/WE thinks they try to do as many family assessments as possible

Dual Response no problems she is aware of

Law Enforcement getting a new sheriff so will have to develop a new relationship

CFT have been having these meetings, have a facilitator

SP Only have 2 foster homes (very small county) and it has been successful. Do have a couple of therapeutic foster homes one through MH and they do not do Shared Parenting with these folks. One of the 2 foster parents is from Illinois and she was familiar with the concept.

Catawba - 2nd wave, feel they are doing pretty well as they have been doing this some time and implemented pretty quickly once they started. Nothing particularly remarkable about the ones not specifically mentioned, feel they are under control

CPS/WE

Dual Response

Law Enforcement SW at the sheriffs dept and officers at the DSS

In Home redesign

CFT really well, Billy Poindexter is in their county (one of the NC State trainers)

SP

McDowell 3rd wave

CPS/WE they collaborate but it is hard to get them to CFTs or joint visits

Dual Response taking more family assessments, don't take bruises or DV, so still pretty conservative

Law Enforcement - sometimes hit and miss, mostly good, but nothing in writing

In Home redesign doing it, do a blended caseload

CFT doing these, have no facilitator yet but there was someone just hired to do facilitation as a part of their job (have other duties as well)

SP depends on the case

Lincoln 2nd wave

CPS/WE still have room for improvement but are working on it, sometimes some communication slips through the cracks

Dual Response

Law Enforcement - new sheriff now so no one really knows him and they will have to rebuild relationships. With the old one had some problems getting DV cases being reported

In Home redesign -

CFT have worked with TALS program, getting better on this
SP

Gaston 3rd wave

CPS/WE have not developed a way to ensure consistent collaboration

Dual Response fully implementing this, reorganized and are taking all as family assessments that they can by policy (except DV). Have designated staff to deal with abuse cases.

Law Enforcement By having specific staff to do abuse cases this has helped the collaboration with Law Enforcement. The city police have indicated that they might designate a specific person to work the abuse cases as well. They work well with sheriff s department and DA s office as well.

In Home redesign very good job on high and intensive, moderate cases may not always get as much response as they could use. Fewer moderate cases. May be a function of blended caseloads

CFT were already doing action team meetings so this is not a big change for them. Sent 6 people to facilitator training and have supervisors with no connection to the case facilitate them feel that their meetings are truly family centered

SP haven t really had this happen yet. Working on getting into the mindset though.

Holly has been surprised at how many FC SW are reluctant to implement SP. We expected the FP to be reluctant but not the SW

Macon early 2nd wave

CPS/WF good, but could be better

Dual Response take all as family assessment that they can

Law Enforcement have had this for years, 2 active investigators that work abuse cases. Their sheriff has a background in child issues

In Home redesign blended caseloads keep a case all the way until adjudication.

Did some of this before MRS, its for coding and funding.

CFT pretty well, not as formal as the state might like. Have access to people who can facilitate when needed

SP had a big cookout and awards banquet. FP trust the DSS not to stick them in a risky situation.

Swain 2nd wave

CPS/WF good collaboration

Dual Response do as many family assessments as they can

Law Enforcement have designated contacts within the police departments although nothing in writing it goes well

CFT going ok

SP don t do a whole lot right now

Henderson 2nd wave

CPS/WF good relationship with WF, relationships depend on the workers

Dual Response most are family assessments

Law Enforcement co-located with law enforcement

In Home Redesign

CFT going ok

SP working to make this more a part of MAPP than it is

Transylvania 1st wave

CPS/WF same floor, work well together

Dual Response take as family assessment when possible according to policy

Law Enforcement new sheriff but his sister is a SW

In Home Redesign

CFT -

SP could do more

Buncombe 1st wave trying to beef up all strategies,

CPS/WF constant state of flux and reorganization . Just put WF under the same area as CPS. Just merged children and adult services intake so everything comes through together

Dual Response nothing automatically excluded from family assessment

Law Enforcement trying to revamp meeting with all local law enforcement to seek tighter collaboration and possible co-locating

In Home Redesign - working

CFT Going to train the 2 WF supervisors to facilitate

SP working with this, Trying to get some data about different types of foster care placements (ones that county licenses and ones that are licensed by others) and outcomes for children

Cherokee 2nd wave

CPS/WF same building, talk to each other frequently

Dual Response pretty well, but at the discretion of the supervisor and knowledge of past history

Law Enforcement kept their sheriff, and she is related to him! Have a formal written memorandum also. Sometimes DV reporting is slow, but there is a victims advocate at the sheriffs office so if one is initially missed it gets passed along by this person

In Home Redesign depends on the worker s ability to do this

CFT could have more, have someone trained on staff to facilitate

SP depends on the family - some of the families are on each extreme of the spectrum.

Polk 2nd wave (a little bit of everything but not all of anything)

CPS/WF WF in their building, but the position is currently vacant

Dual Response take most as family assessment

Law Enforcement just got a new sheriff, somewhat uncertain about the effect this will have. The newly elected sheriff has charges pending against him. Had been doing some joint interviews.

In Home Redesign doing this

CFT have someone on staff trained as a facilitator. Have input from MH staff next door. Writing case plans in meetings.

SP mixed bag some parents are interested and some are not. Some that are interested are too interested (have trouble respecting boundaries!)

Caldwell - 1st wave

CPS/WF strong, have moved CPS and WF under same management

Dual Response think they take 95% of eligible cases as family assessment

Law Enforcement not too bad, but not as strong as it has been in the past. Stronger relationship with local police departments. Always get them involved up front on certain types of cases.

In Home Redesign doing blended caseloads for some time, working

CFT not the strongest of the 7 strategies. Varies among teams

SP do a lot, preach it at MAPP, many parents are very on board with it. Foster Care Licensing social worker facilitates these meetings and that makes the FP feel comfortable.

Jackson - 2nd wave

CPS/WF pretty strong, have a good relationship and share information

Dual Response majority of eligible cases are family assessment. Take severe DV as investigative

Law Enforcement very strong, 2 investigators that they work with, improved relations with the towns and Cherokee police Dept. (just got a new chief)

In Home Redesign started with everyone being generic but that didn t work, so they went back to specialization

CFT established a policy that within 7 days of a case decision they have a CFT facilitated by Mountain Mediation

SP some FP very supportive, but in most of their FC cases there is drug use by biological parents and this is scary to the foster parents.

Haywood - 2nd wave

CPS/WE trying to have quarterly meetings, pretty good collaboration, at CFTs, make sure to keep each other in the loop for joint families

Dual Response 2 forensic investigators, everyone else is assessments, DV with a weapon always investigative

Law Enforcement have had a child advocacy and child protection center for years so have had things in place and also have a lot of SW married to police officers. Have 2 dedicated on call workers so they ended up forming a more personal relationship.

In Home Redesign did blended caseloads right up front, then went back, now have gone back to more blended and it is not working as well as they hoped. (6 to 8 months into trying it the 2nd time)

CFT have had them for some time. There are some workers who don't seem to really believe yet (but they will) Used 4e waiver to pay for facilitator. Have attorneys that come to these meetings

SP often not doing the meetings with in the 1st 7 days, have a lot of informal SP. Have found that the BP are more likely to agree to TPR if they have been involved with the FP and they know the FP will adopt the children.

Wherever you are in your practice is ok, as long as you know where you are and are aware of what needs to be done.

Assignment of cases if there are cases that would be eligible for family assessment but you have decided in your county that you are taking them as investigative, why and which ones?

Buncombe schools at 2 pm in the afternoon and a child is afraid to go home. May take these as more family assessment, but just don't call the family before they go. Turns out that not that many kids are as fearful as reported, but the schools have learned how they can get investigative assessments by reporting like this. Some DV that have weapons, injuries, but not necessarily all these either.

Cherokee if there is history with the family that will not be conducive to family assessment.

Caldwell - has done this as well but only if there is history and the family is uncooperative.

- Holly has heard from newer counties that the ones with history actually work better as family assessments. If what you have been doing has not been working, try something new. Sometimes approaching the family differently can work in a positive way and the family will finally respond.
- Don't just ask about history what kind of history? That may make a difference in the response of the family.
- Bruises many people mentioned that a lot of bruises will make them take as investigative. If you take these as family assessments, how is this working?
 - Macon takes these as family assessments and has been surprised at how much children will talk in front of their parents about how they got their bruises.

- Buncombe says often that once you are there the parent will be up front about the bruises, so this takes the pressure off the kids and they don't feel like they are getting anyone in trouble.

Switching tracks what makes you switch other than when you start with a family assessment and something develops that mandates a switch (by policy)?

Cherokee when they get a report from a school late in the day that the kid is scared, they take as an investigative because of the allegations and the timing. When they determine that the fear is not real, or not as extreme as portrayed, they will switch down to a family assessment.

Other counties do this as well.

- Holly hears that people are uncomfortable bumping cases down after initiation because they feel that initiation is the place where you get the biggest benefit of family assessment. However, there are other reasons to bump down. Can get some services for the family and then do not have to make a finding that labels them as a perpetrator.
- In a month how often do you switch tracks? Avery maybe 5, everyone else less than 5.

Macon if they go out with Law Enforcement and they charge the person right then, they may kick it to investigative so that their findings are consistent with Law Enforcement.

**** Remember that you cannot switch tracks at the point of case decision. You need to do this beforehand. If you feel that it really needs to get switched and you are at the point of case decision then you need to hold the case open longer and delay the case decision.**

Blended Caseloads - Caldwell, Haywood, Macon Cherokee, Transylvania, Gaston

Often workers in blended caseloads feel that they are not able to make their required visits for case management because of getting the new assessments.

- Many times the statistics show that they ARE making the contacts, they just feel like they are not.
- This requires great flexibility on the part of supervisors to ensure that individual workers don't get overloaded.
- Also keep in mind that you have the same number of staff whether you blend or not, so there is the same amount of work to go around its just that SW are multi-tasking instead of just doing one thing.
- Cherokee pointed out that she feels the case management stays open longer because the SW can't focus on that family and ensure that they get services, so they can't go ahead and close it out.
- If your caseloads are high, you need to look at why they are high. Holly recognizes that SW want the families to be perfect before they step out of the case, but really need to look at cases that have been open and critically evaluate the cases and decide if, although these families are not perfect, are

- they really at a level of risk that CPS needs to be involved? Don't open cases that don't need to be open, and close them when it is time to close them.
- Some counties do backlog blitz, or 90 day staffings.

Buncombe - considering going to blended

Haywood - started with blended, quit and then went back because they feel that eventually the state will require it. Some workers like it ok, some do not.

Those folks that are not doing blended, why not?

Avery 2 investigators, only 6 workers. They have an odd sort of blended caseloads so they know how to do all the areas of service, (they may have 210, 215, and 109 but their 109 case they may have gotten as 109, and not carried it from the beginning.) Feel that it would be philosophically difficult for the investigators to switch.

- This is normal, for those who blended it was easier for the case managers to start doing assessments than it was for investigators to start doing case management.

Some feel that what they are doing is working, so why change? They are comfortable.

- Comfort is good, but sometimes you have to shake it up.
- Guilford made the management decision that they were going to do blended and did not give their staff that choice (like we do not give families a choice on the case decision). However, once they made the decision they involved the workers in the how and the process of switching over (like we involve families in the risk assessment and other parts of the case plan).

In Caldwell Holly found that when she was there the moderate case management cases that were a part of blended caseloads tended to stay open an average of 4 months whereas before they were staying open about 8. Part of this was frontloading services, and part of this is the family not having to get used to a new person and not having to tell stories all over again.

Shared Parenting

- Using experienced FP to train new FP because new FP more likely to listen to them.
- Also having birth parents talk about how this affected them.
- Be aware that, although inadvertently, the DSS social worker can set up a barrier. It is obvious that there were some problems otherwise DSS would not have taken custody of the children, but when you are presenting the child to the Foster Parents be sure to present things about the birth parents in a strengths based manner.
- Nash county holds Shared Parenting meetings at the time of placement before the child ever goes into the home of the Foster Parents. You would think that this would be risky because emotions are running high, however they have found in most cases that the Foster Parent is actually able to calm the Biological Parent when the social worker cannot.

Services Recommended someone wanted to know what the difference was

Services Provided the risk would have been at least moderate but because you frontloaded services, you feel that you have reduced the risk enough that you can close. Had you not provided these services, you would have found this family In Need of Services.

Services Recommended - from the beginning it was not moderate risk, issues of quality of care more than issues of safety or risk. This case would never have been In Need of Services.

On your 7 day visit if you find Services Recommended you need to follow up with them on what you are recommending. You may have mentioned it before and they just haven't followed up on it yet.

Future Meetings - Holly is setting these up and will email folks.